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SUBJECT: SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER DISCUSSES U.S./SWAZI RELATIONS IN 2009

Classified By: AMB Maurice S. Parker for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: On December 31, Ambassador Maurice Parker met with Swazi Prime Minister Barnabus Dlamini. The PM requested the meeting to gauge GKOS' standing with diplomatic missions accredited to Swaziland, and to request U.S. financial assistance in building a new state-of-the-art hospital. The conversation also covered SADC's position on Zimbabwe, Iran-Swazi relations, and the continued imprisonment of an opposition leader. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) In response to an invitation from the Office of the Prime Minister, Ambassador Parker met with Prime Minister Dlamini on December 31 to discuss U.S./Swazi relations in 2009. The PM began the meeting by trying to assess the current state of relations between the GKOS and the U.S. Government, due to the ongoing imprisonment of opposition leader Mario Masuku under Swaziland's new Suppression of Terrorism Act. Ambassador Parker expressed his concern over the continued imprisonment of Mario Masuku, President of the opposition party the Peoples United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), for statements supporting terrorism and sedition. The PM stated that Masuku prefers to stand on principal and remain imprisoned, because his bail is affordable (between 50) 100 U.S. dollars). When the Ambassador noted that Masuku's charges appears to be related to public statements he has made, rather than conspiracy to commit acts of terrorism, the PM confided that the GKOS has evidence that PUDEMO was involved in planning the attempted bombing near Lozitha Palace, and their plan was hatched in Bloemfontein, South Africa. He continued by commenting that Mario strongly advocated for the bombing and other terrorist acts. He said that Mario's case will be brought to trial early in 2009, but that he will leave the decision regarding Mario's guilt or innocence to the courts.

¶3. (C) The PM commented that Swaziland would like to enhance the Suppression of Terrorism Act, modeled upon American anti-terrorism laws. To ensure consistency with a similar message delivered by DAS Carol Thompson recently to Deputy Prime Masuku, during his recent visit to the Department, the Ambassador agreed that terrorism is a globally-shared concern that must be addressed. He stated that governments have the responsibility, however, to ensure that counterterrorism laws do not lead to the repression of civil society or political participation. The Prime Minister responded by stating that he will take the Embassy's concerns regarding the Suppression of Terrorism Act under advisement.

CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL REFERRAL HOSPITAL

¶4. (U) The Prime Minister then presented the Ambassador with a written proposal requesting U.S. financial assistance in constructing and equipping a National Referral Hospital for Swaziland in Swaziland. He referred to a serious automobile accident on a highway outside Mbabane on December 30, which critically injured Attorney General Majahenkhaba Dlamini, who was airlifted to a nearby hospital in South Africa. The PM said that Swaziland would like to have a hospital with a well-equipped trauma center that could assist all Swazis, and not have to transfer the seriously injured

citizens, like the Attorney General, to South Africa. The PM said that King Mswati III had recently discussed the project with S/GAC Ambassador Mark Dybul, and DAS for Southern African Affairs Carol Thompson, during their meeting on the margins of UNGA. The Ambassador cautioned the Prime Minister that it might be difficult for the USG to commit to a project of such magnitude during the international economic crisis. However, he reminded the PM that Swaziland could make a concerted effort to improve its scorecard in an effort to join the Millennium Challenge Account.

ZIMBABWE

¶15. (C) The Ambassador and PM discussed SADC's perspective on the Zimbabwe power-sharing agreement. The PM stated that he doubts Mugabe could last in office more than three or four months. He said that most SADC members believe the military will take action within that timeframe, but did not provide specifics to justify his position. He said the King will resume the Chairmanship of the SADC Troika when he comes out of seclusion in early February, but he is doubtful that the Troika, or SADC, will be able to influence Mugabe. He stated Robert Mugabe is a tough and difficult man and that, with the exception of President Khama of Botswana, African leaders do not believe in interfering in the internal affairs of other nations. When reminded that neither Zimbabwe nor South Africa would be free of apartheid without sanctions imposed by the USG and the EU, the PM said that interference and sanctions were not the African way.

IRAN

¶16. (C) PM Dlamini confirmed that he met with Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister (DFM) for African Affairs Ali Bagheri in November. The PM stated that DFM Bagheri visited Swaziland with the intention of meeting the King. Since the King was in seclusion, Bagheri met with the PM in his office. PM Dlamini was guarded regarding the topics he discussed with the Iranian, but stated that DFM Bagheri wanted to deliver a quote pleasant greeting unquote to the King. He mentioned that he received the greeting and delivered it to the King. The PM said that Swaziland is looking forward to improving relations with other Middle Eastern countries, particularly Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, but was not planning to develop bilateral relations with Iran. As far as he is concerned, Iran is not of interest to Swaziland, but the decision to expand Swazi/Iranian relations is up to Minister of Foreign Affairs Lutfo Dlamini.

¶17. (C) COMMENT: The PM's New Year's message to the Ambassador indicated that Swaziland will not dramatically change political or economic direction in 2009. The GKOS will continue to limit freedom of assembly and speech among its people, under the guise of enhancing counterterrorism programs; seek international donations to support their favorite infrastructure development programs without demonstrating a greater willingness to rule justly or invest in its people; and will not provide stronger leadership in the SADC Organ of Politics, Defense and Security. Change comes slowly to Swaziland.

PARKER